Interspecies Newsletter

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When Whales Vanish

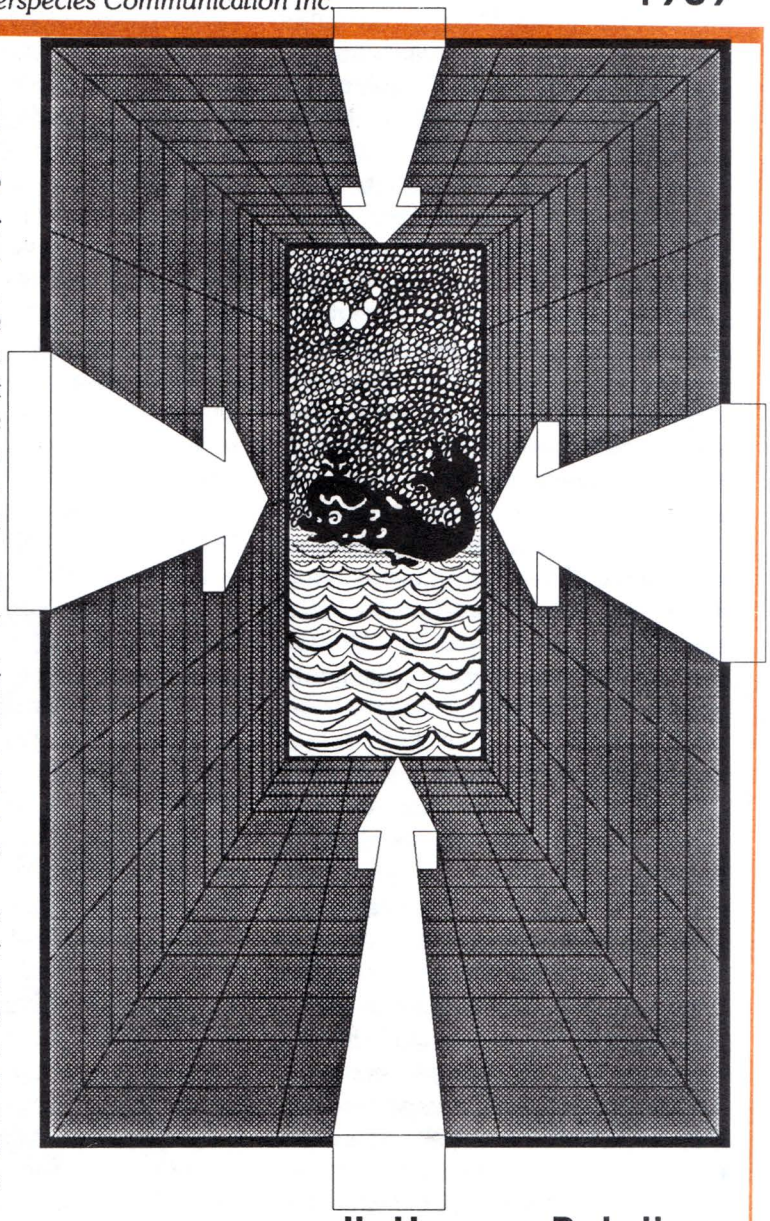
I- The Abundance

Jacques Cartier sailed up Canada's Saint Lawrence River in 1534, expressing utter amazement at the abundance of wildlife he encountered. The river's mouth held Polar bear, enormous herds of beluga whales and even walrus; while whole island's were covered with the nests of Great Auks, a flightless bird closely resembling the penguin. His men soon learned that these birds were not only exceedingly easy to catch but were also quite delicious to eat as well. During one landing, his crew killed over 1000 birds, leaving regretfully only when their longboat was full, for "one might have loaded in an hour thirty such longboats."

Seventy years after Cartier, in 1604, Champlain sailed along the coast of Maine to the same wild reception. "Not a day or a night passed we did not see more than a 1000 porpoise". His crew snagged 50 lobsters in an hour in just three feet of water. He commented on sturgeon up to nine feet long lying on the surface so as to appear a hazard to navigation. The Englishman, Gosnold, reported beavers ruling Boston harbor. Wood buffalo were grazing close to the coast of Virginia. Pierre Radisson wrote about a group of up to 300 black bear marching as a unit through New York state.

Thomas Jefferson, would much later report the bizarre Indian rumor of a relic herd of mammoth grazing much further to the West in what is now Kentucky. In fact, white hunters would soon discover many elephant bones lying on or near the surface of the Kentucky earth, and even used the vertebrae as camp chairs, "admirably rounded to accommodate a hunter's weary rump." There is even the remote chance that David Ingram, an Englishman who wandered lost through the eastern United States in the year 1582, was not fantasizing when he wrote about sighting elephants along his journey.

Today, the Great Auk is extinct while the polar bear and walrus have long since disappeared from southern Canada. The beaver is gone from Boston Harbor, the buffalo from Virginia. The New England lobster fishery is sorely depleted. As for the mammoth, who knows what lurks in the hidden valleys of Appalachia. The belugas still remain in the St. Lawrence, although their numbers have been so depleted during the decade of the 1980's that there is now little hope for their revival. When a number of belugas washed ashore in 1986, the carcasses had to be disposed of as toxic waste.



II- Human Relations

Animals disappear from the plains, oceans, and trees, and we are all the less for it. Unfortunately, the problem with animals is people; meaning that extinction flourishes primarily as a cogent reflection of the relationship that exists between human beings in a humanly overpopulated world. For just one example, the international codes that govern affairs between nations are almost entirely founded upon the concept known as national sovereignty. In simple terms, it means that governments own all the earth, water, animals and plants that exist within their borders. The concept originally developed as a kind

kind of politicized contraceptive device set in place because, throughout history, warring humans have constantly encroached upon the landbase of other humans. The institution of national sovereignty was sanctified to keep the peace between governments.

Unfortunately, this institution within which we are all so irrevocably steeped, fails miserably at offering a mechanism for dealing with a *global* culture trying to deal with the late twentieth century reality of global environmental emergency. For one tragic example, a patently schizophrenic rich/poor society called Brazil "owns" the territory of the Amazon rainforest. However, almost all of the conditions that caused the deep sickness of Brazilian society are internationalist (read global), deeply historical, and probably insoluble in terms of a population disposed to reproduce itself without restrictions. While the degradation of the rainforest presents the human race with a global problem demanding a global solution, instead, the national sovereignty of the Brazilian government forces humanity to redefine the global problem as a local problem, a Brazilian problem as it were. It means that groups like the World Wildlife Fund, the World bank, and the United Nations possess no real capability to solve the rainforest problem unless they take on solving the deeply troubled Brazilian society at the same moment.

But saving the rainforest demands a vastly different set of social tools than fixing any third-world economy. Look at it this way. We Northerners may not be able to offer them any guidelines on how they have to change because, in fact, we are far worse exploiters than they are. Brazilians destroy rainforest as a method of aspiring towards our own North American standard of living. If we export the goals of blatant overconsumption to which we Northerners have so long been accustomed, we destroy that southern environment just as surely as we destroyed the Great Auk, the Grand Banks – and just as we are currently chopping down our own rain forest in the Pacific Northwest. Some example.

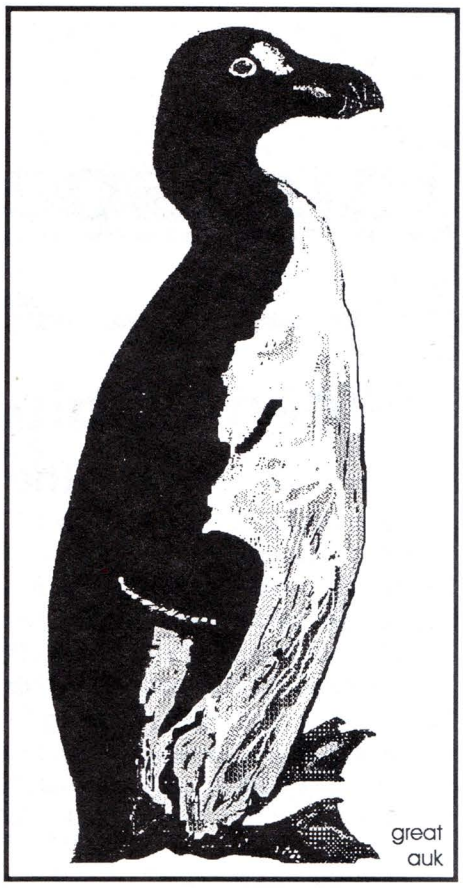
In all seriousness I have to wonder if the best we can hope for is to promote a double standard. Our so-called *success* in North America has to be represented as their inimitable *failure* in South America. We should be telling them this: as long as Brazil tries to catch up with the US economy, as long as the Brazilian people try to live like the overly-consumptive Americans who killed the passenger pigeon and the Carolina parakeet, the rainforest does not stand much of a chance. Yet it seems utterly naive to even imagine the World Bank promoting such an attitude.

Meanwhile a species per minute goes extinct. And if the Brazilian problem is, as I submit, a global problem, then you and I, dear reader can help save the rainforest by making the change in the way we lead our own lives. Go tell a neighbor.

This concept of national sovereignty works against the environment in many varied ways, so permit me one more example: the ongoing tragedy of Japan and the whales. The Japanese believe that the traditional enterprise of whaling is a valid member of their general family of businesses. As long as there are even just a few Japanese people working this very old line of business, the nation-state is going to vigorously protect its own.

To the Japanese economic psyche, there is obviously a general attitude at stake here. To cave in to the world opinion about whales is to disown the deeply-rooted economic system that has brought so much prosperity to the nation. Instead, the Japanese have given the rest of the world a very clear message that they are going to continue to kill whales right up to that point of no return called biological extinction.

Someone looking for a logical explanation to the horrific Japanese oceans policy might go so far as to argue that a culture whose religion (Buddhism) promotes reincarnation, might just possibly view the issue of extinction without the bite of finality that it holds within our own linear, scientific-based culture. I once proposed this same metaphysical view at a meeting of the International Whaling Commission. I was practically shouted off the podium by the Japanese delegation until the moderator demanded that I contain my


great auk

remarks to the pertinent issue on the floor. The issue in question was a discussion about why the Japanese would not abide by a whaling moratorium recommended by the rest of the members of that august but powerless body of old men scientists and politicians.

Actually, this entire issue of Japanese whaling probably offers us the strongest case yet about the inconsequential flabbiness of international law as a real tool for saving animals and the environment. In this instance, the outcome has been a twenty year stalemate at the International Whaling Commission.

The *dying-is-not-final* argument certainly possesses some merit. However there is also another explanation that fits the institution of national sovereignty; in this case, as it connects ecosnomic growth to nature. After all, at some point in any environmentalist's education, he or she comes to realize that much of what we call economics is just a euphemism for what is actually an unmitigated war against nature.

War is the institutionalization of violence. Whether it be waged between

true believers and infidels, or between merchants and the once plentiful (but long extinct) beavers of Boston harbor, it is the supreme dispassionate human activity. On that note, it does not seem unfair to regard the Japanese as the most successful economic "warriors" of this last quarter of the twentieth century. All is fair. That may be the reason that they continue to deride all anti-whaling arguments as sentimental (feminine), and all pro-whaling arguments as scientific(manly). Consequently, the Japanese have made it quite clear that they need not actually do anything beside listen to all the arguments presented by the international community. Their behavior is not unlike that portrayed in the movie, *The Godfather*. They seem so utterly prideful to thumb their noses at the global community – just because they believe that slaughtering the last of the great whales is what keeps their own whaling families happy.

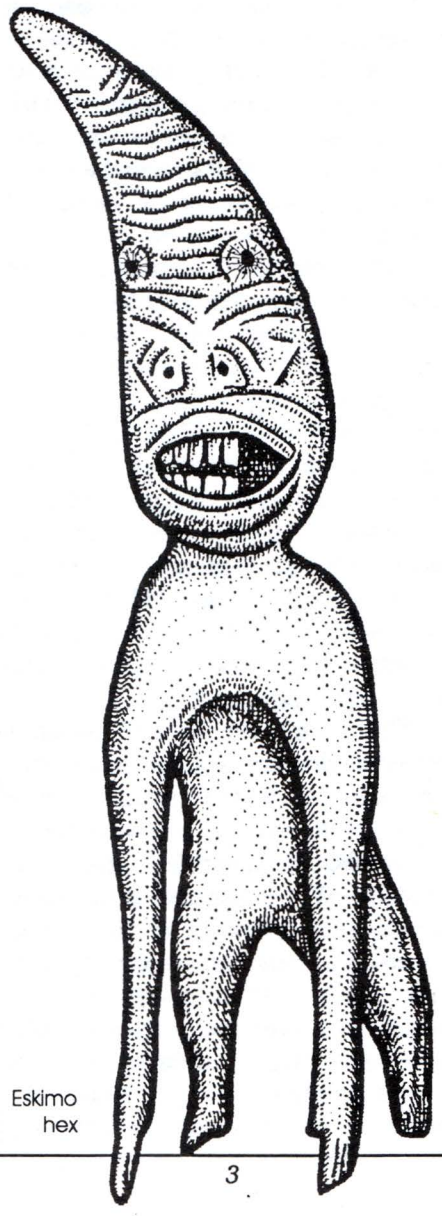
Meanwhile, reports from Antarctica report that the minke stocks, the Japanese' current victim, are much lower than anyone assessed. Blue and humpback whale stocks have made no significant gain in their numbers even after ten years of moratorium.

I emphasize that it is not just Japan and whales, Brazil and rainforests. Wherever the concept of national pride promotes an expanding gross national product, we find a war against nature. In this case, the Japanese are best represented as re-enacting an instant replay of the same moves we made against the buffalo, the same moves that the Australians are currently making against kangaroos, and the Brazilians make against rainforests. Only the species change.

III- The Unexpected

This past July IC mounted the third year of our ongoing Beluga Peace Project. The project did not turn out quite as we expected, although it put us in a crucial position to both document and publicize the tragic process of a cetacean species on the verge of losing its traditional habitat to human encroachment. Loss of habitat has always been one of the symptoms of an impending extinction. Hopefully, this report can offer enough momentum to alter the situation before the whales are forced to leave the area forever.

Our project had long been promoted as an interspecies meeting with beluga whales 400 miles north of the Arctic circle along the Canadian shores of the Beaufort Sea. Our three person crew spent two weeks on the huge MacKenzie River delta, motoring and camping 350 miles through a wild area purported to be the summer nursery for as many as 10,000 beluga whales. The MacKenzie delta provides a habitat far more gentle and warm than any other place along the entire Arctic coast of Canada which is the precise reason that beluga mother's have traditionally brought their newborns here for thousands of years. Belugas migrate from as far away as Siberia to spend six or eight weeks within the unique riverine environment that is this delta.



Eskimo hex

But last year, 1988, became the first summer in historical memory that no more than a few animals from the main herd of belugas even came close to the delta. The situation turned even grimmer during the summer of 1989 when no belugas were sighted within 30 miles of the coast. The situation seemed critical. If the newborns are not brought into the protective, warm waters of the delta, they stand much less chance of surviving their first weeks of life.

The virtual disappearance of the belugas caused no little amount of consternation among the Inuvialuit Eskimo hunting culture which has long depended upon a larder of summer caught beluga meat to help sustain itself through the long Arctic winter. Until 1988, the Eskimos hunted the beluga by stationing themselves on top of twenty foot high observation towers built all along the coastline. When the belugas appeared, oftentimes in pods of several hundred animals, the hunters would simply climb down from their towers, start up their boats, and motor out onto the relatively placid delta. One or two whales per family per year was all it took.

But it is quite a different story for a hunter to have to motor thirty miles offshore in a small boat to hunt the suddenly elusive beluga. For example, when the wind suddenly starts blowing from out of the north – meaning off the icepack – it can kick up from 0 to 30 knots in less than a minute while dropping the air temperature by 40°. Furthermore, the chances of even locating the belugas so far offshore is considerably more difficult. Worst of all, once the animal is killed, dragging its 3000 pound carcass across 30 miles of open water can become a nightmare in an open twenty foot boat.

Because IC has sent expeditions into the heart of this beluga country during both 1988 and 1989, many of the local people actually placed the blame for the beluga disappearance squarely on the shoulders of IC. After all, in their own minds, we were the only new factor in the equation. What was it, many of them wanted to know, that we intended

to communicate to the whales?

Our green boat didn't help matters. More than one Eskimo accused us of being eco-guerillas from "Greenpeace", which they used as a kind of generic term that referred to any person or group who wanted to protect animals to the detriment of human hunters and trappers. Hadn't "Greenpeace" closed down the trapping business just a few years earlier? There was also the issue of our own advance man, expedition member Jonathan Churcher, playing a copy of IC's human/orca music, *Orca's Greatest Hits*, over Arctic Radio that past winter. His intent had always been to enlist some of the hunters to come join our project as musical guests. The plan obviously backfired. Orcas would easily scare belugas out of the delta. And even if we didn't plan to actually play that particular tape, our guitar and keyboard sounds must obviously sound quite a bit like orcas or the orcas would never had responded in the first place.

IV- The Art of Myth

The Eskimo's accusation shocked us. Actually, it seemed almost beyond belief. We were openly blamed for keeping the belugas out of an incredible 900 square mile area of Arctic water by playing music to them.

From the point of view of three interspecies artists who possessed more than a passing interest in metaphor and symbol, this invented cause-and-effect relationship between musicians, Eskimos, and whales seemed at least as potent a myth as anything we, ourselves, could have created – even if we had actually succeeded in interfacing with the whales directly.

There is more to this, another level entirely; one that skirts the edges of a cosmic mystery, and belies our growing sense of humility at being handed the power to conduct an interspecies field project from right inside the bubble of an Eskimo myth. You see, it soon became impossible for us to deny that there was, indeed, a very strong connection between the disappearance of the beluga whales and our own synchronized entrance upon the delta. However, our own interpretation of that connection was of a very different sort than the original accusation.

What I mean to confess here, is that the myth about our power with the beluga whale soon transformed into the reality of our power with the Eskimos. We came to believe that our own active participation in the developing Eskimo myth could conceivably affect more positive change than our own original intention of playing music with beluga whales. With no beluga whales to be found anywhere, we really had no choice in the matter.

The tools we had at our disposal were our own innocence, our experience as environmentalists, and our stubborn aim to create art with the beluga whales of the MacKenzie Delta.

For example, at every one of our own campsites, project member and Earth Artist, Daniel Dancer immediately started gathering feathers, grasses, sticks, and bones in order to construct what he called Earth Art [see sidebar]. At first, it seemed his own personal way of transforming a situation that was fast becoming hostile into a celebration of our presence on the land.

But art has a way of grabbing more power than any simple collection of feathers and bones could foretell. One night, camped among the remains of a very ancient beluga hunting camp, Dan built a mobile from the beams of a rack used long ago to dry beluga meat. His sculpture was composed of most of a beluga skeleton with two skulls facing in opposite directions. Soon after he completed the mobile, the wind started to howl, setting the ten foot-long, two headed beluga skeleton into an uncanny swimming motion.

The swimming beluga skeleton seemed so downright supernatural, that a stressful discussion soon erupted among the three of us over whether or not we should dissemble it upon our departure. Was it disrespectful to leave such a... such a *hex* for all the Eskimo hunters to witness as they passed down the channel on the way to their own camps? We solved the problem by taking a democratic vote. As far as I can surmise, unless some angry hunter took the mobile apart after our own depature,

We pitched our tents in abandoned whaling camps. These were places where the beluga once swam in close and access to them was easy by native kayaks. Nearby, there were other camps where modern native hunters were poised for the white whale's arrival. With guns, ammo, harpoons, and gas aboard, the boats were tethered to the shore in anticipation. We listened for the beluga's playful sounds in our tents at night and scanned the seas for them by day – but they did not come.

Camping amongst the ruins of these *interspecies ghost towns*, we felt a wound, an abuse, a need for reconciliation. The bold Arctic race that once hunted the beluga from handmade boats was long gone. In their place were modern descendents who used hollow bullets instead of harpoons, 150 horsepower motors instead of paddles. The wild, free spirit of the white whale in the delta had been replaced with fear. We could feel it.

As I walked amongst the remnants of these old camps I gathered bits and pieces in my path. Feathers of cranes and eagles, strips of weatherbeaten cloth from discarded blankets and tents, beluga bones carried in by the tide or strewn about the ruins. These were the relics of place. In one camp I found a pit full of beluga skulls. I put four of them on top of four posts set in a square which once supported a rack for drying blubber. Standing in their midst, I prayed to the four directions and offered tobacco from a can I had found on top of an old trash heap.

I carried the best skull back to camp. Along with a complete beluga skeleton we had found earlier and the other materials I had gathered, I began sculpting what came to be called "the beluga peace maker". I hung the bones with twine in a swimming motion from a goal post like frame – probably the center support of an old whaler's tent. Feathers sailed amongst this bleached sky whale. Eagle, sandhill crane, owl, seagull, – we salute you beluga and miss you in this place! We sing your life.

– Dan Dancer

it is probably still swimming in the breeze as you read these words.

Likewise, the three of us agreed to use our newfound power base as a means to uncover the real reason for the beluga's disappearance. Embracing that task, we made the effort to visit and discuss our benign musical intent at every Eskimo hunting camp in the area. Emotions ran the gamut. At one hunting camp our hosts offered us lunch, played our waterborne instruments, and posed for pictures. At another camp thirty miles further up the coast, the young men became so hostile that they actually followed us five miles across open water just to make sure that we were leaving their domain as we said we were.

V- The Meeting

On another dramatic occasion, after a long night spent motoring through a gale to locate higher ground, an airplane full of local dignitaries and scientists actually dropped down in our camp to meet with us, answer our questions, and ultimately demand that we not play our beluga music "until mid-August when the hunt is over". Nobody needed to mention that by that time both whales and IC would be long gone from the delta.

One of our visitors, the president of the local hunting and trapping association, asserted a correlation between the disappearance of the beluga whales and an overly muddy river. He blamed the Greenhouse Effect for causing a change in the climate. That meant, of course, that the belugas are disappearing because the Brazilians are cutting down the rainforest.

But when Jonathan asked if any of them thought that the mud might just as easily be a function of newly initiated clearcutting activities two thousand miles upriver, the government scientist in attendance vociferously denied it. We later wondered among ourselves how he could be so sure of himself, and why the question had made him so downright uncomfortable.

We asked our visitors if the change in beluga behavior might be attributed to the very fast, "Miami Vice" style boats now favored by so many of the hunters. To a beluga, these boats must appear as veritable death machines, making it virtually impossible for any whale observed offshore to make an escape. After all, when the weather is calm you can spot a beluga two or more miles offshore. That whale could be approached and shot dead within a mere ten minutes. Furthermore, the drone of those engines, some as large as 200 horsepower, can sometimes still be heard from the shore even after the boat has dropped out of sight below the horizon. Might not the acoustically-sensitive whales be attempting to stay beyond the hearing range of those engines – or about 30 miles offshore? Significantly, these boats have only come into general usage during the past five years.

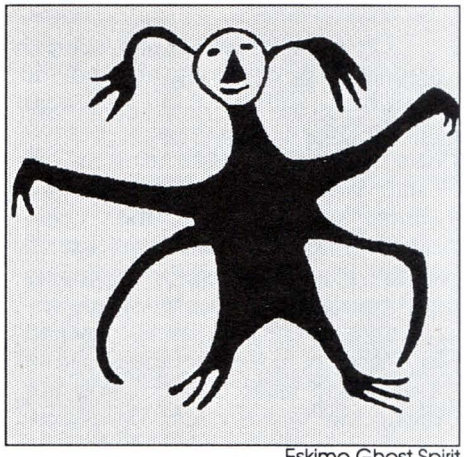
Unfortunately, the non sequiturs that passed for answers made us realize that the locals were not willing to consider themselves as part of the problem. "No it couldn't be that," answered one hunter. "We hunters need to kill belugas to feed ourselves through the winter. Pork chops cost a lot of money to buy, and we can't grow wheat like you Southerners. We are a poor people who need to hunt in order to survive."

We had obviously touched a nerve.

VI- Spiritual Ecology

The three of us were aware that, for hundreds of years, the Inuvialuit relationship to their own sustenance was essentially a spiritual matter. The humans only killed the animals in order to survive, and never killed more than they needed to survive. Food was a sacrifice and a gift, a bequest from the spirit of the slain. This prompted the formalization of a ceremony of attunement between the human predator and his prey.

The ancient Eskimo who killed a beluga whale had to refrain from doing any work or having any sex for four days because that was the precise amount of time the animal's ghost lingered near the carcass. Likewise, no one in the village could use a sharp object for fear of wounding the ghost, or make a loud noise for fear of frightening the ghost. If by accident, the ghost was offended, then bad luck or even death might beset the village. This resulted in still more ritualized injunctions.



Eskimo Ghost Spirit

Some call this, superstition, and so, find easy grounds to dismiss it. I call it spiritual ecology, because it describes humans and animals existing as interpenetrating aspects of the larger ecological community. But whatever its called, we all need to recognize that these beliefs also created an interconnecting sense of responsibility between villagers and whales. Whales were not killed indiscriminately, which insured the preservation of the species. The preservation of the whale insured the preservation of the people.

By comparison, the modern Inuvialuit beluga hunt, this noble and sometimes desperate attempt at retaining cultural tradition, suffers on several fronts. Firstly, and no matter what the locals may argue, the survivalist need to hunt the beluga in order to feed the aboriginal village has essentially vanished, to be replaced by the generic village super market selling pork chops as it does everywhere else in North America. Significantly, some of the locals point to the faceless modernity of the market to argue that the Beluga hunt serves to reinstate traditions otherwise in decline. No one argues against this cultural hunger.

Secondly, all of the hunters rely entirely upon the modern rifle, and only utilize the traditional harpoon at the very last to secure a severely wounded animal to the boat. But for those who find dubious traditional merit in the current reliance upon high-powered guns shot from the platform of high powered boats, the hunters retort that they, themselves, are not interested in becom-

On a beach at another camp I made a white whale out of hundreds of pieces of driftwood. It's eyes were purple lousewort flowers, its big red heart a piece of nylon from an old camp blanket. From the beluga's mouth, rising to meet the ocean, came a long spiral with feathers stuck in the sand marking its beginning and center. We built a tall whale observation tower with storm-bleached logs brought to this promontory from a thousand miles upriver. Atop this tower the whale could be photographed. In the warm, latenight sun, I sat twenty feet above the beach and watched the only whale I would see.

– Dan Dancer

ing museum relics. Instead, they are a modern day people striving to define an identity that melds the best of two worlds. When the three of us talked to these hunters in person and listened to their good-hearted yet very passionate descriptions of an experience that obviously meant very much to them, I heard them say that the beluga hunt exists today as a vital bridge across the chasm of a century of disruption brought upon their aboriginal birthright.

Except it is not. In fact, it is a brutal, bumbled massacre. The most telling point about the experience is that the hunters may actually lose a greater percentage of wounded animals today than they did before the advent of firearms. This occurs mostly because the traditional harpoon always tethered an animal to the boat. Unless that line breaks, the animal was secured no matter what else happened. Guns, on the other hand, offer more power, but no such security. Based on statistics gathered between 1972-75, one scientific observer, W.J. Hunt, estimated that the modern killed-to-lost ratio was about 40%. This translates as 4 whales lost for every 10 killed. Most significantly, this does not even take into account the many whales that were wounded and yet somehow escaped.

The hunters can not even seek after what some choose to call a *humane* kill. Should the whale be killed outright, the body will immediately sink like a stone in the muddy, coursing waters and will almost certainly never be recovered. Instead, the modern beluga hunter relies upon a soft-pointed bullet because he shoots, not to kill, but rather to wound; to impair the animal enough to get within harpoon striking distance. As Mark Fraker observed during the hunt of 1980:

In one case 40 rounds were fired at a large male before it was killed. I could clearly discern 27 wounds within about 30 cm. of the eye... In another case, a hunter expended 60 rounds at a whale that he was ultimately unable to secure because he had used up all his ammunition.

VII- Arctic Radio

After two weeks out on the delta, the three of us returned once again to the town of Inuvik where we soon learned that, in our absence, Canadian Arctic Radio had recently devoted a talk show to the issue of IC's ongoing communication project with the whales.

Let it suffice to say that none of the locals were bold enough to assert that we stood directly responsible for pushing the beluga whales out of the Delta. However, everyone seemed to agree that we should not have been allowed to be out there in the first place. Not unlike the Brazilians and their rain forest, the Japanese and their whales, the Americans and their snail darters, the locals of the MacKenzie Delta adamantly believe that they own most of what remains of the world's stock the beluga whales. That also means, of course, that we "non-owners" had no right whatsoever to attempt melodic communication with the beluga whales without first asking the Eskimo's permission to do so.

Naturally, the CBC was very keen to interview me as well. At first I talked about the art of communicating with animals, and the inherent responsibilities of creating a new kind of Earth art to help heal a wounded planet. The interviewer then shifted the focus of our conversation to my more heated opinions about the modernization of the hunt altering beluga behavior. At the end of our taped conversation, the interviewer, who was a local herself, seemed close to tears. She commented that no one had ever criticized the beluga hunt so severely, while also expressing respect for the endurance of local culture.

She told me that her own daughter had been quite taken by IC's original intent of playing music with the beluga whales. The ten year old girl had recently gone against tradition by flatly refusing to join her father out at one of the hunting camps. The girl confided to her mother that she always felt so sad to watch the beautiful white whales being hauled up on shore like so much meat.

As always, the future lies with the children.

VIII- CODA

IC is already planning its Beluga project for summer 1990. No, we shall not return to the MacKenzie Delta. Instead, we are looking at an area 1000 miles to the Northeast, up in the High Arctic Islands above the Canadian mainland. One place in particular, Somerset Island, contains a summer population of belugas swimming in a clear deep fiord; and with no human population within 250 miles. Transportation costs alone to such a locale can be enormous, and so we shall need all the help we can get. Anyone interested in supporting this next phase of the Beluga Peace Project, please contact IC.

– Jim Nollman

Playing music near our beluga sculptures and photographing them during this luminous time made me wonder about their power. What impact would they have upon the native people who come upon them? Would the stories carried home by those who viewed these works keep the power and spirit alive?

In a sense, perhaps this art became a form of interspecies communication. It was not the form we intended but nonetheless it was, perhaps, a shamanic way of reaching out to the belugas and their hunters. This was an art that preserved something wild, something sacred.

– Dan Dancer

Orca Project

As we have done for the past several years, IC anchored a 40 foot boat in the same little cove off the East Coast of Vancouver Island and then attempted to interface, acoustically, with some of the orcas who frequent the vicinity during the month of August. Three important intuitions from the past two summers crystalized further during the 1989 Orca Project:

● Only a very few individual whales from the hundred or more who frequent the area have ever actually been interested in creating dialogues with us. One whale in particular, a 24 year old male named A-6, was pinpointed this summer as the individual most interested in engaging our ongoing underwater music making. His signature whistle is somewhat unique, and we have a taped record of his developing personal interest in us over eight years of interactions. His inquisitiveness is further accentuated by the fact that, in previous years, we were always well aware that his mother, A-2, was often among the whales initiating our night time music making activities. A-2 died sometime during the past winter. And whereas for five years in a row A-2 led her pod into our cove every night at about 10 PM, this year the pod altered its pattern more to the daylight hours.

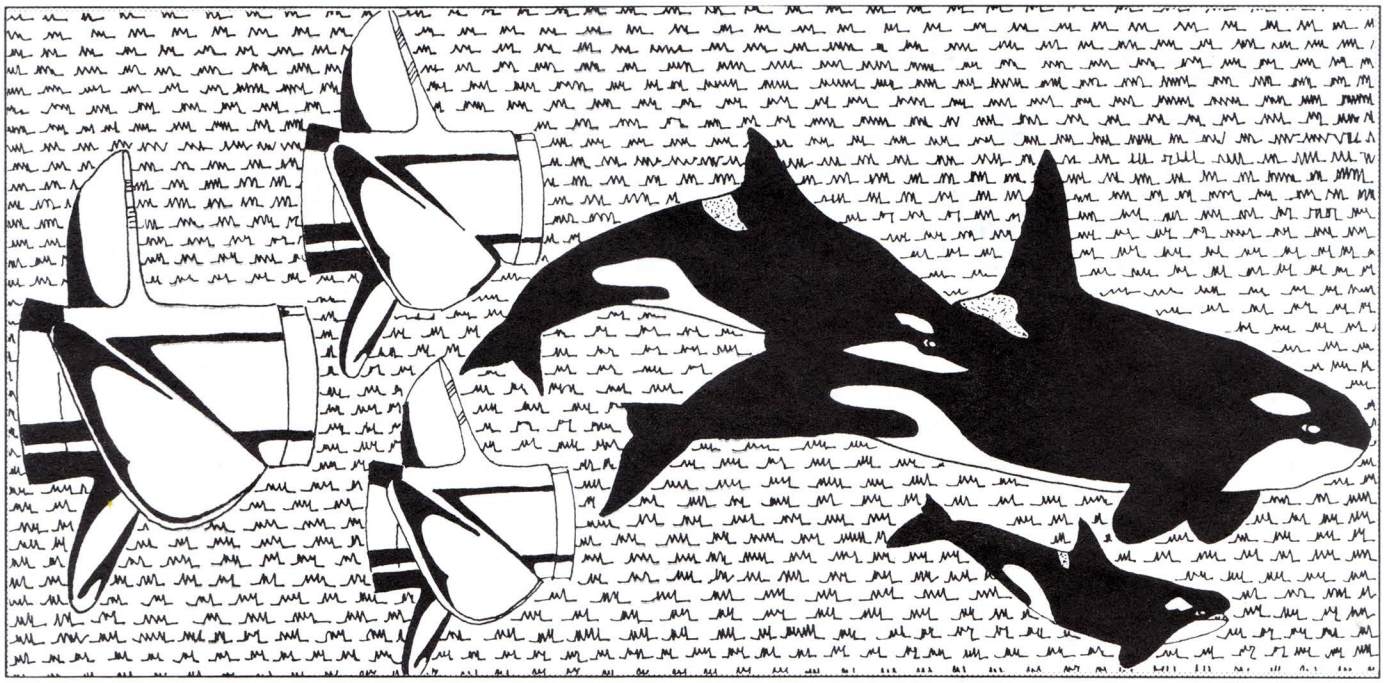
● Like the beluga whales of the MacKenzie Delta, the orcas of Johnstone Strait are showing strong signs of evacuating their longtime summer feeding grounds. At one point, they actually left the whole area for most of a week. Also like the belugas, most of the issues being raised to explain this departure are founded upon encroachment by humans. Past newsletters have described the incessant harassment from scientific researchers. In fact, our own acoustic monitors which are probably not as sensitive as an orcas "ears", are able to pick up the sound of a small 25 horsepower engine from about a mile away. Yet on one occasion last year we spied 3 whales being closely followed for several hours by 6 inflatable boats and two whale watching boats. Commercial fishing has also expanded, so that on some nights there may be as many as 600 nets strung along the Strait. Worst of all may be the very loud diesel engines from the barges, which pull everything from cars to logs up and down the fast growing British Columbia West Coast.

● Not wanting to remain part of the problem, IC has decided to leave its longtime music making site and go search for an area much further away from the boat traffic of Johnstone Strait. Perhaps the whales will want to find us in their own search for a less noisy environment. Next year's camp will emphasize the aspect of creative artists working within wilderness. There will be more on this subject in a future newsletter.

One last note: this summer's orca project was taped for future broadcast by the Thursday night ABC news show, PrimeTIME Live. As this newsletter goes to press, we have no idea when the segment will actually be aired. We believe that their crew did an admirable job of catching the mood of the camp.

The Gift

One long time supporter of IC creatively responded to our recent plea for more membership subscriptions by sending in eight $50 memberships as gifts for her friends. It seemed such a good idea, that we've decided to promote it generally as a Christmas gift-giving idea. **Support IC, send memberships to your friends.**



Constance Perenyi